

FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Rural, cozy, with the Rocky Mountains shining through the window. The sunlight filters in then twists like a prism through a plexiglass barrier.

Separated like prisoners and masked because of a pandemic, a young family of three await a diagnosis.

MELODIE (17), eyes bright, angsty, fatigued with long hair hidden by a hoodie, draws flowers with a dry erase marker onto the wood arm of a chair. She wilts as the hoodie falls around her like a blanket.

She pushes in her ear buds to drown out the world. Her teenage angst finally getting the better of her.

MELODIE

This is ridiculous.

ERIC (43), the kind of everyman you might have a beer with on occasion, reads a magazine from the clump stretched out on a coffee table.

ISABELLA (41), the older mirror image of Melodie, rips off the mask then paces in a hot mess of tears and anxiety.

ERIC

Come on, Belle. Can you just sit down?

ISABELLA

I can't.

ERIC

Her last check up was fine.

MELODIE

You know, I'm right here.

Eric slaps down the magazine then anchors himself in front of Isabella.

ERIC

Stop.

ISABELLA

I can't shut it off.

ERIC

Slow down. Breathe.

ISABELLA
We'll have to protect her from-

ERIC
You can't insolate her from the
world.

MELODIE
I know, right.

ISABELLA
Watch me.

The DOCTOR, as if masked from a COVID battle-zone, knocks and enters.

Isabella peers through their facemask and face shield to get a read. But, nothing.

ERIC
What's the news?

Behind the barrier, they remove the face shield with a thud then with a deep breath.

DOCTOR
She's going to need a transplant.

Isabella gasps, the crushing truth hitting her all at once.

Eric rushes to hold her but is pushed away.

Isabella, flooded by memories, breaks down.

QUICK FLASH

Melodie as a baby.

Melodie as a toddler taking first steps.

Isabella teaching piano to Melodie at ten years old with a huge smile.

Melodie singing around the house at twelve.

SNAP BACK

Melodie, apathetic to the news as if she already knew it was coming, draws a tombstone in-between the flowers.

ERIC
How long do we have?

DOCTOR
If we're lucky. A couple of years.

ERIC
And if we aren't?

DOCTOR
Less.

ERIC
There has to be more we can do.

DOCTOR
Wait and hope.

ERIC
Would I be able to donate?

ISABELLA
No. NOT HERE.

DOCTOR
You can't. You aren't a paternal
match.

The holy shit splashes across Melodie's face.

MELODIE
What?

Melodie, about to erupt, stares down both of her parents.

ERIC
We didn't think it would matter.

MELODIE
It kinda does!

Isabella, unable to speak, trembles with anxiety.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
This is how I find out?

Melodie explodes out the door to dead silence in the room.

INT. HOUSE - MELODIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Happy eighteenth birthday balloons float aimlessly around the room to read eighty-one.

Melodie slouches on the bed encompassed by the same hoodie that now has faded and sports a tear on the back lower left.

She scrolls through her phone to send a text.

Melodie (TEXT) **She's on the moon today. Can you pick me up?**

Melodie scoffs at a variety of kidney and headache medications on the top of a dresser giving a few a shake.

Eric (TEXT) **I'm already waiting outside.**

The horn from Eric's old truck chirps in the distance.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - EARLY MORNING

Melodie tiptoes past another bedroom before her eyes connect with Isabella.

Isabella weeps quietly into a pillow then turns away.

Melodie wipes the door casing with her sleeve then draws a crescent moon in dry erase marker.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - EARLY MORNING

The steep mountain peaks conceal this small town in the middle of nowhere Colorado.

Eric blasts the heat in his old Ford F150 truck.

Melodie races to the truck to avoid the cold air. She jumps in with a slam of the door.

ERIC
Hey, easy on the truck.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Eric, annoyed, taps her shoulder with the back of his hand.

Melodie shrugs.

Eric yanks out her ear bud.

ERIC
Hello?

He scorns her with a look.

MELODIE
OK.

Melodie packs away her ear bud away with a sarcastic snap.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Happy?

ERIC
It's a start.

MELODIE
Then what?

ERIC
Just talk to me.

MELODIE
Can we just go already?

Eric hits the gas pedal and they're off.

INT./EXT. TRUCK - TRAVELLING - EARLY MORNING

Eric plays with the radio. A familiar song comes on. He hums to the beat.

ERIC
Didn't you sing this all the time?

MELODIE
It's just a song.

The radio crackles.

ERIC
Maybe. I still remember you singing it as loud as you could.

MELODIE
That was a long time ago.

ERIC
Maybe for you.

MELODIE
You'd wouldn't be able to hear it now anyway.

ERIC
Weren't you going to see her in concert?

MELODIE
You know mom would never let me go.

Silence fills the truck followed by static pops of the radio teetering back to life.

ERIC
Maybe next time she's in Denver.
We...

MELODIE
Yeah, that's likely to happen. I
can always watch it on YouTube.

ERIC
But, that isn't the same.

MELODIE
(Under her breath)
It's all I have.

ERIC
You know I'm here for you. No
matter what.

He holds out a pinky for a swear.

MELODIE
I'm not six anymore.

Melodie conceals a half smile then taps her foot as she finds
the rhythm and words again. She draws a shining Sun on the
door.

Eric enjoys the moment no matter how brief.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - EARLY MORNING

A brick building, the largest in the town, stands three
stories tall with patches of paint to cover old sign
placements.

The old F150 stops in front.

ERIC
Just text me when you need a ride
back.

MELODIE
I'll be fine. I need to "Keep
Active." anyway.

She exits with another slam of the door.

ERIC
Really.

Melodie observes a car with Nevada plates parked across the street. An old Jeep Wrangler hardtop with crack paint, fogged windows, and tires that don't seem to match.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - TREATMENT ROOM - MORNING

The DIALYSIS MACHINE hums.

Melodie listens to music and scribbles into a wire-bound college ruled notebook. Her left hand holds tubes covered by her hoodie sleeve.

The notebook looks plastered with random thoughts and ideas. Every edge of the page has been used, yet she finds more space to write.

VANESSA (58), the nurse, enters. Her scrubs have a few buttons with positive quotes that reflects her wise old owl vibe.

VANESSA
Hey, how are you doing?

MELODIE
I'm ok.

Melodie hides her arm.

VANESSA
Would you mind if I take a look?

MELODIE
It still hurts.

Vanessa points to a button on her scrubs that says "B+".

Melodie turns away with a grimace.

Vanessa rolls up the sleeve. She rolls it down when she's finished examining then checks the machine's operation.

VANESSA
It's fine. It's doing exactly what it's supposed to do. Any word from the doctor about a transplant?

MELODIE
Still waiting.

VANESSA
Any updates?

MELODIE
(Under her breath)
Still dyin'.

Vanessa taps her on the shoulder to break the mood.

VANESSA
Still writing?

Melodie lights up, excited

MELODIE
Yeah.

VANESSA
When are you going to play
something for me?

MELODIE
I don't know. There's only like one
piano around here.

VANESSA
Please? I want to be able to say I
knew you when.

MELODIE
I have to survive first.

Vanessa points to another button that says "You Got This".

VANESSA
I just want to be on the guest
list.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - ROOF - DAY

Melodie's oasis. A flat rooftop with insulation rocks and steel roof ventilators. All the town can be seen from its vantage point with the view of the mountains making the small town feel even smaller.

Melodie breezes onto the roof with a rare smile.

She sees the Jeep as it drives off.

Melodie moves a chair into place then studies the words on her notebook. She closes her eyes and mimics playing on a piano.

EXT. SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWN - AFTERNOON

Music blares over any sounds of the town.

Melodie breaks her walk into small segments to not overexert herself by looking into shop windows.

Most people ignore or deliberately avoid interacting with her.

A girl roughly her age purposely steps away.

Melodie closes her eyes then mimics a death emoji.

TEENAGE GIRL
That's not funny.

EXT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

It's an old coffee shop with aging counter tops and not many visitors just outside of town.

OLLIE (52), a cook with all the grease in the kitchen wiped onto his apron, notices Melodie passing by. He knocks on a window to get her attention.

Melodie waves for him to come outside when she sees him jumping.

Ollie's hands push back a "No." before hollering back through the window.

OLLIE
She's not calling out is she?

A shrug of her shoulders says "I don't know."

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Melodie enters to eerie quiet.

Dirty dishes fill the sink.

MELODIE
Mom?

She tiptoes through the house to the hallway.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Melodie peeks into Isabella's bedroom.

Nothing has changed.

MELODIE
Don't you work tonight?

She snaps on the light and draws a sad face emoji onto the casing under the crescent moon.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Isabella wipes the counters in circles over and over.

Eric, watches for a moment, then rests at the main counter.

ERIC
Can we talk?

ISABELLA
It isn't going to change anything.

ERIC
Don't be like that.

Isabella wraps silverware into napkins.

ISABELLA
Don't blame me for this?

ERIC
Can you stop?

ISABELLA
I'm working.

ERIC
There's nobody here.

Her pace accelerates with every wrap.

ISABELLA
There will be.

ERIC
Who?

Eric surveys the nearly empty coffee shop.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Please, don't make me the bad guy.

ISABELLA
We don't need to be rescued.

ERIC
Are you sure about that?

Isabella dumps the silverware onto the counter then rushes to the restroom.

Ollie pops his head through the two-way door.

OLLIE
Come on man. Don't leave me a fuckin' hurricane.

ERIC
Sorry.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Isabella rushes into a stall and dials a number. She shakes from anxiety.

ISABELLA
Come on. Pick up.

INTERCUT

INT. VANESSA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa wakes with the vibration of her phone rattling on the nightstand. She views the caller ID.

VANESSA
It's late.

ISABELLA
I know. I just can't stop this feeling.

VANESSA
You know, I'm just a nurse.

ISABELLA
I don't know who else to talk to.

VANESSA
That's why I gave you that book.

ISABELLA
It isn't helping.

VANESSA
There isn't much else I can do.

ISABELLA
Come on really?

VANESSA
I get it. I can see how much stress
this puts on you. But, you gotta
figure it out like everyone else.
You got this.

ISABELLA
I should just focus on Mel.

VANESSA
Maybe you shouldn't.

ISABELLA
Why?

VANESSA
I think you know why.

ISABELLA
It's just easier to focus on
someone else.

VANESSA
But, what does that do for you?

ISABELLA
What else can I do?

VANESSA
Tell Ollie to stop burning my hash
browns.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Isabella returns from the bathroom still frenzied. She
searches for Eric.

OLLIE
He's gone.

ISABELLA
Stop burning Vanessa's hash browns.

OLLIE
She likes them crispy.

INT. HOUSE - MELODIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Isabella rattles chairs and vacuums the living room.

Melodie pulls back the hood of her sweatshirt to listen.

She cracks the door and glances into the living room then hops back into bed with a push of her ear buds into place.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Isabella cleans and organizes literally covering the same spots over and over. She stops at the drawings on the door jamb, her expression softens.

Melodie's door rustles and Isabella rushes back to the living room.

Melodie stops to change the drawing.

Isabella catches her, questions driving by mania.

ISABELLA
What are you doodling?

MELODIE
It's nothing.

ISABELLA
How are you? Is everything ok?

MELODIE
I'm fine.

ISABELLA
Do you want me to make breakfast?

MELODIE
NO. I'm okay.

ISABELLA
Let me wash that hoodie and fix that tear.

MELODIE
MOM. I just washed it the other day anyway.

A honk from outside grabs their attention.

ISABELLA
Why is he here?

MELODIE
Why do you think?

Melodie rushes out the door.

Isabella wipes the drawing of a raincloud complete with lightning, rain, and wind.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

A beautiful landscape of trees towers over the coffee shop. A large mountain looms behind it. There's a small path outlined through the trees down to a river not far away.

From inside the Jeep, JAMES (22), shy, quiet, boyishly cute, and hardened by life experience, wakes from an uncomfortable sleep with a cough and gasp for air.

He jumps out of the Jeep to catch his breath then walks to the water's edge.

James removes a picture from his wallet, maybe an "Ex". A medical alert bracelet that reads "James J. Asthma. Rescue inhaler needed. ICE - Ava Richards." hugs his wrist.

James secures the picture then removes an Asthma rescue inhaler. He throws it into the river like skipping a rock.

James reaches for his bracelet but stops when a whitetail fawn thrashes in the water unable to raise itself above the edge. It calls out distressed.

James races to pull the fawn from the water.

JAMES
Come on. It's ok.

He sights a growing rapid in the distance.

The fawn's mother huffs at James still holding the fawn. James sets the fawn down and it jumps away.

The mother locks eyes with James. He closes his.

The mother prances away with the sound of a piano in the distance.

James searches for the sound then peels off the mud and leaves.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - DAY

The stage, hidden behind some old curtains overlooking a basketball court, seems forgotten in time with dust on a piano and other musical equipment.

Melodie props her phone onto a stand carved out of discarded Styrofoam. She grabs two stress balls from the piano to squeeze and stretch her fingers.

Melodie lifts the fallboard and presses a few keys to check the tune then opens her notebook to play.

MELODIE

I can do this.

She presses record on the phone.

{Note: This song should be an original that is reflective of Melodie's creative spirit. Inspiration for this moment is a the song EET - BY Regina Spektor.}

Melodie stops abruptly wincing in pain. She moves to the open back door then leans against the opening to massage her wrist.

Kids, in the distance, fight over a toy as the parents come to break them up.

Melodie shakes her fingers then heads back to the piano.

She writes a few more lines into the notebook. With a deep breath, she restarts.

The piano can be heard across the stage through the open doors of the high school gymnasium.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

The back of the stage has a set of steps for access.

Music echoes into the yard.

The sound draws James in for a closer listen. He ascends the steps to the edge of the door. James quivers with emotion.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Melodie fights through the pain to complete the song.

She crosses her arms over her chest then taps to match her heartbeat. Her breathing calms and demeanor relaxes.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

James, lost in memories, turns to descend but stops. He ponders a moment then removes his dirtied hoodie and ties it around his waist.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

There's a knock on the door.

MELODIE
HOLY SHIT BALLS!!

Melodie wildly jumps to her feet.

JAMES
I didn't mean to scare you.

MELODIE
You know this is a school, right?

JAMES
I know. I liked the sound. Just
thought I'd see..

She smiles.

MELODIE
Really?

James coughs. He finds his breath and the coughing subsides.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

James nods then steps close to examine the piano. He touches a few keys. She notices his bracelet.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Cool bracelet.

James moves his wrist to hide it.

JAMES
Thanks.

Melodie resists the urge to step back intrigued by him.

MELODIE
Do you play?

JAMES
Not really. Do you post?

MELODIE

No.

JAMES

I was hoping to hear more.

MELODIE

I've never thought about posting online.

JAMES

Why not?

MELODIE

I didn't think anyone would want to listen.

JAMES

I would.

Melodie smiles then she reviews his cute features.

MELODIE

I guess I'll see you around?

James changes his focus from the piano to Melodie.

JAMES

Maybe.

He half smiles and walks to the exit.

MELODIE

Thanks.

JAMES

For?

MELODIE

Never mind.

James exits.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - NIGHT

It's a little outlet for drivers to rest then get back onto the road. The school is visible in the distance.

The Jeep hides at the end of the row. The bad suspension rocks from movement inside.

James, reclined in the passenger seat, shivers unable to sleep with the sound of the piano echoing in his head.

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James, eyes closed rocking to the beat, plays guitar. He opens to see.

AVA (22), the woman from the picture, a beautiful piano player with soft features and delicate hands plays across from him and smiles.

The music stops for an intermission.

Ava steps close.

AVA
You're not worried.

JAMES
About?

AVA
There is almost no one out there.

JAMES
It'll pass. People are just making more of it than it needs to be.

AVA
It's starting to stress me out.

JAMES
I've got you.

AVA
Promise?

JAMES
Of course.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

Melodie tiptoes through the hallway to peer into Isabella's bedroom.

The room is empty and the house is quiet.

The door casing has been cleaned.

Melodie bites her lip then draws a happy face with a question mark next to it.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabella quietly reads a book on coping with anxiety. She seems tempered and even keeled.

Melodie cautiously approaches then breaks the quiet.

MELODIE
No cleaning?

ISABELLA
Hey. You're up.

MELODIE
That's what typically happens when
I WAKE up.

ISABELLA
How are you feeling?

MELODIE
I'm fine.

ISABELLA
Is your wrist ok?

Isabella reaches for Melodie's arm.

MELODIE
I told you I'm fine.

She pulls it away.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
What we really should be asking is
if YOU'RE fine.

ISABELLA
So, sometimes I'm a little moody.

MELODIE
A little?

ISABELLA
Yes.

MELODIE
You don't see it?

ISABELLA
What?

MELODIE

Hmm.. Let's see. The mood swings,
the mania, the nights you seem to
move furniture like it's never good
enough.

ISABELLA

You have no idea what you're
talking about. Or what you think
you know.

MELODIE

Then explain it to me.

ISABELLA

I wish I could. You don't know what
it's like for me.

MELODIE

Clearly.

Melodie pushes in her ear buds and rushes out the door.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

James seats himself at the lunch counter. He places down a wire bound college ruled notebook similar to Melodie's then picks up a menu. James examines his wallet to see only a few dollars.

Isabella, careful to approach, keeps a small distance. Her observant gaze notices the few dollars in his wallet, a rumpled appearance, dried dirt on his clothes, and a soft sadness behind his eyes.

ISABELLA

Can I help you?

James finds the cheapest deal on the menu.

JAMES

Coffee and some pancakes?

ISABELLA

Decaf?

JAMES

Just regular coffee is fine.

She pours a cup then gently slides it over.

ISABELLA

Can I get you anything else?

JAMES
No. I'm fine.

ISABELLA
Just some pancakes Ollie.

OLLIE (O.S.)
Coming up.

James reaches for his notebook. He writes with much more structure and organized intent.

He struggles to breathe.

ISABELLA
Are you okay?

JAMES
Excuse me?

ISABELLA
Are you alright? You look a little...

JAMES
Sorry. There was a deer that fell into the river. I haven't washed my shirt.

ISABELLA
You jumped in the river?

JAMES
The edge. There was this fawn that couldn't find it's way out.

ISABELLA
Locals don't even jump into the river.

OLLIE (O.S.)
Too cold.

The order bell rings and Ollie slides a plate of pancakes under a heat lamp.

ISABELLA
Syrup?

James nods his head for a "yes".

Isabella squeezes the syrup then slides the plate still careful to keep her distance.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Here you go.

Isabella goes back to work.

James hides a wry smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James tunes an old acoustic guitar. The open case sits a few steps away. It's layered in stickers ranging from Pokémon on the bottom layer to band and venue stickers on the top. Most noticeable is "Ava & J" in complex lettering like a tattoo.

James strums the guitar for a small crowd of onlookers. He plays a song with a noticeable talent.

A few onlookers dump coins and bills into the case. Others don't even acknowledge he's there.

OFFICER DANIELS, a seasoned police officer, listens intently for a few moments with surprise. He's hit by a flash of recognition.

FLASH - James, distraught, pushes tears from his face in an apartment.

OFFICER DANIELS
Do you have a permit to be out
here?

James nervously strums and stares at the ground.

JAMES
Can I help you officer?

OFFICER DANIELS
Remember me?

James shrugs his shoulders.

OFFICER DANIELS (CONT'D)
You're talented. But you look like
your one bad night from something
terrible.

JAMES
Do you know what it's been like for
me?

James packs his guitar then scatters change and bills across the floor.

Officer Daniels picks up some of the bills. He pulls out another \$200.00 from his wallet.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You don't.

Officer Daniels places the money in James's hand.

OFFICER DANIELS
Take this.

James reluctantly accepts it but struggles to give it back.

JAMES
I don't need your charity.

OFFICER DANIELS
Trust me. You do.

Officer Daniels steps away with his partner.

His partner shakes his head.

James, fully packed, rushes from the street.

BACK TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - LATER

James's fights to keep his eyes open but they get heavier. His head droops as he falls asleep at the counter.

Isabella cleans continuously. It's as if she doesn't have an off switch.

Ollie knocks in the kitchen pass-through. He throws a cleaning towel at her.

OLLIE
Hey.

Isabella looks back.

ISABELLA
What?

OLLIE
Don't rub the counters to the floor.

ISABELLA
What are you talking about?

OLLIE
Look at yourself.

ISABELLA
I'm just working.

OLLIE
It's already clean.

Isabella stops to look at some of the counters worn in circles like they've been cleaned over and over.

ISABELLA
I did all this?

Ollie hold his hands out like he's not going to get into it then steps away from the window.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Don't run away from me.

OLLIE
Sometimes you over do it.

ISABELLA
Why haven't you said something before?

OLLIE
Why do you think?

Isabella steps back, disappointed. She notices James asleep.

OLLIE (CONT'D)
He can't sleep here.

ISABELLA
Shut up.

OLLIE
Wake him up.

ISABELLA
Don't worry about it. It looks like he needs it.

Ollie purposely drops a pot in the kitchen.

James, startled, shakes his head to wake then knocks over a coffee cup.

JAMES

Shit.

ISABELLA

Let me help you.

Isabella, with a moist towel, wipes down the counter top.

JAMES

Sorry.

ISABELLA

It's okay. It's not your fault.

Isabella cleans the mess then throws the towel into the kitchen.

OLLIE (O.S.)

Missed me.

JAMES

What was that about?

ISABELLA

He saw you falling asleep.

Isabella, apologetic, steadies herself.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

But really, you can't sleep here.
I'm sorry.

JAMES

It's alright. I'll leave.

James yawns and stretches.

ISABELLA

There's a motel 6 about ten miles
from here if you need to get some
sleep.

JAMES

How much do I owe you?

ISABELLA

Don't worry about it.

JAMES

That isn't how it works.

James pulls the last of his money and lays it on the counter.

Isabella reaches for his notebook.

ISABELLA
My daughter has something similar.

JAMES
I hope not.

ISABELLA
I'm really sorry.

JAMES
Why? You aren't kicking me out.

ISABELLA
I just feel like I am.

JAMES
Don't worry. This is a coffee shop
not a motel. I get it.

Isabella watches James walk to his Jeep.

ISABELLA
You're such a jerk.

OLLIE
What? You kicked him out.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

James focuses back into the coffee shop from his Jeep. He writes into his notebook.

JAMES (V.O.)
It's a thousand cuts. Small little
breaths that cry out. How long will
this take?

James turns the ignition but the Jeep sputters and stops.

Again, he tries.

Again, it sputters.

James taps at the gas gauge that reads empty.

His eyes droop tired and off to sleep.

JAMES
Please.

James coughs wildly again.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Isabella channels meditation exercises.

The sound of Eric's truck breaks hard into the driveway.

Isabella watches him rush from the truck through the front door.

ERIC

Mel!

ISABELLA

What the hell are you doing?

ERIC

Is Mel awake?

ISABELLA

Why?

ERIC

We have to go. There's a kidney.
Mel!

ISABELLA

Why did they call you?

ERIC

Let's not get into that right now.

Mel, half asleep, shuffles in.

Eric grins ear to ear.

MELODIE

What?

ERIC

There's a kidney.

MELODIE

Are you kidding?

ISABELLA

We're not ready.

MELODIE

How ready do we really have to be?

ISABELLA

Washing that sweatshirt would help.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Isabella paces nervously around the room.

Eric anchors himself in front of her.

ISABELLA
I can't believe they called you.

ERIC
That's what's bothering you right now?

ISABELLA
I'm not helpless.

ERIC
You have a lot going on.

ISABELLA
I can manage this.

ERIC
Then why does she text me?

Isabella barely holds her anxiety together ready to rip into him.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Look, I don't want to fight. Just imagine, we'll be able take her to a movie or concerts.

ISABELLA
And expose her to all those people?

ERIC
Yeah, and she'll be just fine. Besides, you bring strangers home all the time.

ISABELLA
That's different.

ERIC
How? You don't owe anyone a thing.

ISABELLA
It's something I feel need to do.

ERIC
What do you think she needs?

Eric stares at Isabella in silence.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - DAY

The doctor's and nurse prepare for a transplant surgery.

A nurse wheels in Melodie on a gurney.

DOCTOR
Excited?

MELODIE
You have no idea.

DOCTOR
Let me just walk you through it.
The kidney will arrive and we'll
have to examine it before we start.
Naturally, you'll be out before
that happens. But, when you wake
up, it should feel different.

MELODIE
Do we know..

DOCTOR
Don't ask those questions. Just
focus on you.

Melodie, emotional on the table, churns not knowing to be
happy or sad.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
I want you to start counting
backwards...

The anesthesia takes effect and Melodie is out.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Melodie, groggy but anxious, awakens. She pushes her hand
down to feel the bandage but doesn't feel anything.

She watches the doctor speak to her parents through the
window.

Eric, scared and angry, pleads with them.

Isabella, tuned out, paces in a heap of tears.

Eric turns to hold Isabella but she pushes him away and down
the hallway.

The doctor enters the room.

MELODIE
What happened?

DOCTOR
There was an imperfection with the
kidney.

MELODIE
You said...

DOCTOR
I know.

MELODIE
NO.. No.. You said I'd feel
better.

DOCTOR
I'm sorry.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Melodie practices different finger exercises on the piano.
She massage her wrist between movements.

James knocks.

The piano stool falls over as Melodie jumps to her feet.

JAMES
Sorry. I didn't want to scare you.
Again. Would it be ok if I came in?

Melodie considers it but is hesitant.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's ok. I'll go touch grass.

James frowns and turns.

MELODIE
I'm sorry. I haven't really played
for anyone.

JAMES
Why?

MELODIE
Scared to.

JAMES
You're better than you think.

MELODIE
Am I?

Melodie replaces the stool and relaxes at the piano.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Come in.

She nervously taps at the keys.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I only write songs. So, I don't
know many.

JAMES
Play what you know.

MELODIE
Would you play something for me?

JAMES
I can't.

MELODIE
Please.

JAMES
I don't have my guitar.

Melodie points to a case not far away.

MELODIE
There's a guitar over there. I've
never seen anyone play it.

JAMES
If I play for you, will you post
what you play for me?

A moment of fear overtakes Melodie.

MELODIE
How do you really know I'm that
good?

JAMES
I just recognize your talent.

MELODIE
Have you posted anything online?

JAMES
Not in a while.

MELODIE
Share your Insta with me?

James hesitates.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I'll post my song. Shake on it?

Melodie covers her hand with her sleeve and shyly reaches out.

James returns his hand.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I'm Mel by the way.

JAMES
James.

Melodie scans through her notebook.

James grabs the guitar case then finds a seat.

MELODIE
Don't judge.

Melodie breathes deeply in and out to calm herself, hits record on the phone, and with some hesitation plays.

{Note: These songs will be original songs. Melodie's song is hopeful but has a hint of despair behind her words. James's song is shaped by loss and feels like he's singing about an ex-girlfriend. The tone should be close to Older Than I Am - By Lennon Stella and Arms Around You by Jamie Grey.}

Stunned by her talent, James applauds.

Melodie blushes and smiles ear to ear.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Your turn.

James removes the guitar and tunes it. He strums it to check the sound.

JAMES
Don't judge.

James plays a song that's equally as good. He coughs and destroys the vocals at the end.

MELODIE

Are you sure you're ok?

JAMES

I'm fine.

MELODIE

That was amazing till you blew the last few parts. I was going to stand up and clap but... you know the coughing kind of killed it.

JAMES

Yeah.. Story of my life I guess.

James packs the guitar and sets it aside.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Keep it up. You could be really great.

MELODIE

We can only hope.

JAMES

I mean it.

MELODIE

So did I.

James pauses at the door.

JAMES

I'll leave you to it.

Melodie holds out her phone.

MELODIE

What's your Insta?

James views her Instagram screenname and types it into his phone.

JAMES

Shared. It's not much.

MELODIE

Will I see you again?

James turns back with a wry smile then pushes his head down to leave.

JAMES

You have my Insta.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

A few guests are scattered across the coffee shop. This is about as busy as it gets.

Isabella enters with an extra apron.

ISABELLA
Hey, Ollie?

OLLIE
Yeah? What's up?

ISABELLA
Has that Jeep been out back all day?

OLLIE
I don't know. I've been working.

ISABELLA
Has the guy from the other night been in?

OLLIE
No. Why?

ISABELLA
No reason.

OLLIE
You know, Eric's going to be mad if you take in another stranger.

ISABELLA
I don't care.

OLLIE
I'm just saying. You can't help everyone.

ISABELLA
I can help you.

Isabella tosses Ollie a clean apron.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - AFTERNOON

James daydreams while strumming his guitar.

He watches different people enter the rest stop and park then shivers with a thrust of cold air.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - STAGE - AFTERNOON

Melodie closes the fallboard on the piano.

She reviews her video.

MELODIE
Here goes nothing.

Melodie hits post on a YouTube profile.

She switches over to a notification on her Instagram.

Melodie hits play.

ON THE VIDEO - James and Ava perform.

JAMES
(On Video)
Sure you don't want to be in this?

AVA
(On Video)
This is your audition.

*{Note: This song is James playing guitar with lead vocals and
Ava playing piano off camera.}*

The screen glows in Melodie's eyes. She smiles in amazement.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

Isabella fixates on her side work then attends to guests needs. When she has a moment to rest, her emotions run hot and cold.

James enters and finds a booth to lay low.

Ollie pops his head out of the kitchen to get Isabella's attention.

OLLIE
Hey. Belle. You called it.

Isabella recognizes James at one of the booths. He blankly stares out the window.

ISABELLA
Hey. Sorry about the other night.

JAMES
No need to apologize.

Isabella grabs a clean glass and a pitcher of water to bring to the booth.

ISABELLA
Coffee and pancakes?

JAMES
No thanks.

ISABELLA
Water?

James nods.

Isabella pours a glass.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
I felt I was being mean the other night.

JAMES
I was really tired. It won't happen again.

ISABELLA
Are you sure I can't get you anything?

James shakes his head "No" then sips the water.

Isabella returns the pitcher back onto the counter.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James strums his guitar.

Ava races out of a backroom in a panic. She moves erratically around the pit.

James carefully sets down the guitar.

JAMES
Hey. Calm down. What's wrong?

AVA
There's no more work. They're going to stay dark into next year.

JAMES
We'll get through this.

AVA

How?

JAMES

They'll start opening back up.

AVA

We can't just wait and hope.

JAMES

We'll get through this.

Loud knocks on a door snaps James to attention.

BACK TO:

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - LATER

James sips at the water to enjoy the warmth of the building.

ISABELLA

Is that your Jeep?

James stares off into the distance.

Isabella waits for an answer.

JAMES

Yeah. Is it ok to be parked out there?

ISABELLA

I'm sorry. I was just curious.

James doesn't respond.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Are you staying with someone?

Eric enters and sees Isabella with James.

Ollie, spatula in hand, looks ready to start a fight.

OLLIE

Are you here to cause a mess?

ERIC

I ordered a special. Who's the kid?

OLLIE

Fuck if I know. But, he's been here a couple of days this week and hasn't ordered shit today.

(MORE)

OLLIE (CONT'D)
Better watch out. She might take in
another stray.

Eric rushes to interrupt her conversation.

ERIC
Can we talk?

ISABELLA
This has to stop.

Isabella pushes away.

Eric chases down Isabella at the lunch counter.

ERIC
Ollie tells me he hasn't ordered
anything?

ISABELLA
He just did.

ERIC
Belle. Really?

Isabella pulls a plate of food from under the heat lamp and
yells through the kitchen pass-through.

ISABELLA
I need another special.

ERIC
That's mine.

ISABELLA
Not anymore.

ERIC
You can't just help every random
stranger that pops in here.

Isabella steps around Eric to reach James's booth.

ISABELLA
Here's your order.

James looks befuddled.

A smirk and a look back at Eric.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Compliments of him.

Isabella reverses back to Eric.

James watches them argue.

ERIC

Okay. I get that you need to do this sometimes. But...

ISABELLA

I should just let him go sleep in his car tonight?

ERIC

You don't know that.

ISABELLA

I need to do this right now.

ERIC

You can't give strangers a free pass because of what happened.

ISABELLA

Watch me.

Their voices are muffled to James as he strains to listen.

Isabella points at the door and Eric finally leaves. She returns to James.

JAMES

Are you ok?

Isabella, taken aback, questions herself to answer.

ISABELLA

No one has really asked me that in a while.

Isabella still keeps a careful distance between herself and James.

JAMES

Is there something wrong? I can leave if you don't want me here.

ISABELLA

No, nothing like that. I'm just cautious around people I don't know.

Isabella peers into James's eyes.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

What brought you here?

JAMES
It's nothing.

ISABELLA
Running from something?

JAMES
Maybe.

ISABELLA
Where are you going?

JAMES
Nowhere. Just driving.

ISABELLA
Driving?

JAMES
I don't know what to say. I got
into my Jeep a couple of days ago
and just felt like...

ISABELLA
Getting away?

James nervously eyes the exit.

JAMES
I'm not used to being questioned.

Isabella rolls silverware into napkins.

ISABELLA
More water?

JAMES
Sure.

Isabella pours James another glass.

James appears lost in his thoughts.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

James shivers and holds his arms close to keep warm.

Isabella approaches with a gas can.

James lowers the window.

ISABELLA
Do you need a place to stay?

JAMES
I'll be fine.

ISABELLA
It's going to get cold out here. I
don't know if sleeping in your car
is the best thing to do.

James brushes it off.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
I have a place you can sleep.

JAMES
Why would you do that?

ISABELLA
Where else are you going to go?

James debates with himself to accept.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
What other options do you have?

James realizes that she isn't going to take "No" for an
answer.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Have you ever had the measles or
chicken pox, COVID?

JAMES
Hasn't everyone had those once?

ISABELLA
It's nothing.

Isabella pushes the gas can to him.

JAMES
How did you know?

Isabella looks back with a wry smile and waves for him to
follow.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MIDNIGHT

Melodie's phone glows in the darkness of the room.

Isabella hears the loud music coming from Melodie's ear buds.
She clicks the lights on.

MELODIE
You're home early.

ISABELLA
It's almost midnight. You should be
in bed.

Isabella searches a drawer.

MELODIE
What are you looking for?

ISABELLA
The cabin keys.

MELODIE
What the hell.

Melodie storms off.

ISABELLA
It's not what you think.

INT. CABIN - MIDNIGHT

It's a simple cabin with a few amenities such as a heater, television, a small desk, and a sofa bed. There is a little counter with a small coffee maker.

James hauls in his guitar case and backpack then sets them next to the door.

ISABELLA
How long have you been playing?

JAMES
A while.

ISABELLA
I played piano. I tried to teach my
daughter but.. We kind of lost
interest.

Isabella brews some coffee. She cleans a few places with a rag and moves around some cushions for the sofa.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
There isn't much. But, there's a
pull out bed in the sofa. Coffee in
the nook over there and a full
bathroom.

JAMES
Do you ever stop?

ISABELLA
What?

JAMES
Working.

Isabella realizes it and forces herself to stop still restless.

ISABELLA
She leaves this place a mess.

JAMES
Your daughter?

ISABELLA
She uses this from time to time.

James examines the sofa. He notices a few doodles on the walls. He points to them questioning.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
She doodles.

Isabella moves the cushions on the sofa to remove the pull out bed.

James stops her.

JAMES
I got it.

James coughs with few labored breaths that don't quite fill his lungs.

ISABELLA
Everything ok?

JAMES
I'm fine.

ISABELLA
Sometimes it takes a couple of days to acclimate to altitude.

JAMES
We'll see.

ISABELLA
See you in the morning.

Isabella exits.

James looks over the cabin. He stops the coffee pot from it's brew.

JAMES

Why?

James searches his backpack to find his notebook. He sets it on a table to write.

EXT. CABIN - EARLY MORNIN

Melodie spies outside the cabin. She quietly places the key into the lock.

The knob turns and the door opens.

Melodie, startled, steps back from the door to see James.

MELODIE

Are you following me?

JAMES

Hey. I'm not. Your mom? Offered me a place to sleep. Do you need to come in for something?

MELODIE

I'll come back.

INT. CABIN - TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Melodie views a notebook on the table. She nearly pushes James out of the way to reach it.

MELODIE

What the hell! You're here one night and start reading all my shit?

Melodie smothers it with her arms.

JAMES

That isn't yours.

MELODIE

Like hell it isn't.

JAMES

Take a look.

Melodie examines the book.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You can put that back.

Melodie places the book onto the table and searches her hiding spot. She finds her notebook in place where she left it.

MELODIE
Sorry.

JAMES
I wouldn't have read it.

MELODIE
I guess we will see you.

JAMES
I guess.

Melodie, embarrassed, rushes out of the cabin.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - TREATMENT ROOM - MORNING

Melodie searches through her notebook but seems distracted. She draws stars onto the edge of the chair.

VANESSA
What's on your mind this morning?

Startled, Melodie snaps to attention.

MELODIE
It's nothing.

VANESSA
Is he cute?

MELODIE
What?

VANESSA
Whoever is on your mind. I heard Belle took in a guy.

MELODIE
You already know about that?

Melodie smiles embarrassed.

VANESSA

Hey, I was wondering if I'd ever see one of those.

MELODIE

What do you mean?

VANESSA

I love it when you smile. He must be cute.

MELODIE

It's just nice to meet someone new who doesn't know all about me. I played a song for him.

VANESSA

He gets a song and I don't?

MELODIE

I posted it online.

VANESSA

I want to see.

Melodie turns over her phone to Vanessa and hits play.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

See. You already have likes and shares. How long ago did you post it?

MELODIE

Yesterday.

VANESSA

All of this in one day?

MELODIE

I know, right.

VANESSA

I would love to see you on a stage.

MELODIE

Do you really think that could happen?

Vanessa points to a button that says "Anything is possible".

VANESSA

It's not about what I think.

Melodie considers the possibility.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Beats just surviving.

Melodie smiles.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
How's your mom doing?

MELODIE
Don't ask.

VANESSA
Is she reading that book I gave her?

MELODIE
She was reading something.

VANESSA
She cares. Maybe she just needs a little push to see things clearly.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

James sips at some coffee at the kitchen table.

Isabella slowly prepares more coffee but appears weepy and tired.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry about this morning.

JAMES
It's not your fault.

ISABELLA
Not exactly.

JAMES
You must be a good teacher.

ISABELLA
Of what?

JAMES
Piano.

ISABELLA
What? We haven't practiced in years.

JAMES

Well, I found her practicing a couple of days ago.

ISABELLA

Really? It's been difficult between us lately. We can't really talk.

The coffee machine brews. Isabella pours a cup for James.

JAMES

You don't need to go out of your way for me.

ISABELLA

It's okay. If I don't make it for you, it'll just go to waste.

James gives her a wry smile.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Well, let me show you around.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - DAY

Autumn leaves sprinkle the ground from the weather change. The cabin hides down the driveway. A couple of large trees mark the edge of the property. Chunks of a tree stump remain scattered next to the cabin.

ISABELLA

This has always been home. Where are you from?

James cuts her off.

JAMES

What do you need done?

ISABELLA

I need the yard cleaned. Firewood. It snows pretty bad sometimes in winter.

JAMES

It snows in Vegas like once in a blue moon.

ISABELLA

Vegas?

James has already said too much, he turns away.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
Well, if you stay here long enough,
you'll see plenty.

JAMES
I don't think I'll be here that
long.

ISABELLA
What brought you here?

James discomfort grows with each question.

ISABELLA (CONT'D)
I'll stop with the questions.

JAMES
Is it hard for you to stop
sometimes?

James acknowledges her restless behavior.

ISABELLA
You see that?

James nods then appears lost in his thoughts.

QUICK FLASH - Ava races out of a backroom in a panic.

JAMES
I've seen it before.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - DAY

James cleans all the fallen branches and debris from the
front of the house. He moves slowly and appears pale from the
activity.

Eric pulls up in his truck and quickly exits.

Melodie hops out with a slam of the door.

ERIC
Hey. Easy on the truck.

Eric sighs and shakes his head when he sees James.

Melodie, wilted and worn out, trudges to James.

MELODIE
You don't have to do this.

JAMES
It was the deal.

ERIC
What is this?

JAMES
I'm just cleaning the yard.

James continues to pick up the branches.

Eric looks over to Melodie.

ERIC
Get some rest. Go back to the house
before you get sick out here.

Melodie slumps and walks to the house then looks back through
the window.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Listen. Don't take advantage of
this.

JAMES
I didn't plan to.

ERIC
I mean it.

JAMES
I understand.

Eric races to the door.

He looks back at James, disappointed.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eric enters without knocking.

The noise spooks Isabella from her daze.

ISABELLA
You need to stop this. You can't
just barge into my life and dictate
what I do.

ERIC
What are you thinking?

ISABELLA
He needs help.

ERIC
You need help.

ISABELLA
Do you feel that's your job?

ERIC
Who else is going to do it for you?

ISABELLA
I'm done with this. You need to let me do this.

ERIC
Is that really what you want?

ISABELLA
Yes.

ERIC
That means no more rides. It means no more texts in the middle of the night. If you don't need me, I need you to say it.

ISABELLA
She is MY daughter.

Eric pulls back surprised.

Melodie listens from the kitchen.

Eric finds her.

MELODIE
She didn't exactly say it.

ERIC
Please. Just stay away from that guy.

Eric holds back from saying more then rushes out the door.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

James rests on the sofa. He drinks water like he can't get enough into his body.

Melodie sneaks up on James as he's lost in thought.

MELODIE
Hey.

James quickly turns surprised.

JAMES
Hey.

MELODIE
Everything ok?

James coughs.

JAMES
I'm fine. Just thinking.

MELODIE
Do you want to get outta here?

JAMES
I should get back to work.

MELODIE
Please?

EXT. SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWN - DAY

Melodie and James walk through the town looking into the windows of various shops.

JAMES
Do you want to in and get something?

MELODIE
I never really go in.

JAMES
Why not?

MELODIE
I just don't.

James notices various people stepping around them.

JAMES
I'm sorry.

MELODIE
For what?

James acknowledges his dirty clothes.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
It's not you. I can wash them for you.

JAMES
Would you?

MELODIE
Of course.

JAMES
It won't take you away from school
will it?

MELODIE
How young do you think I am?

JAMES
I just assumed.

MELODIE
I graduated last year. No one has
really stopped me from playing.
Kind of why I didn't think anyone
cared.

Melodie pulls out her phone to show James some news.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
You know. I posted it.

JAMES
I know.

MELODIE
Are you getting people to share it?

JAMES
No. If people are sharing, it's
because it's really good.

MELODIE
Did you really think it's that
good?

JAMES
Absolutely. It reminds me of
someone. She was really talented.

MELODIE
Your Ex?

JAMES
Something like that.

MELODIE
Where have you played?

JAMES
Mostly small venues.

James nervously shuffles.

MELODIE
That would be such a dream of mine.

JAMES
You have the talent for it.

MELODIE
Can I play something else for you?

INT. STAGE - DAY

James pulls a chair next to the piano as Melodie readies herself to play.

Melodie places her phone onto the Styrofoam.

MELODIE
Can you hit the record button for me?

JAMES
Sure. Tell me when you're ready.

Melodie nods.

(Note: This song shows more of MELODIE's growing vulnerability and hope to connect with James.)

JAMES (CONT'D)
You should play it for her too.

MELODIE
In time.

JAMES
I'm going to get back.

MELODIE
Play something for me.

Melodie begs with a look like a sad kitten.

JAMES
Fine. Scoot.

James slides onto the piano stool next to her.

MELODIE
I thought you only played guitar.

JAMES
I can play a little piano too.

MELODIE
Cool.

JAMES
Why is your mom helping me?

MELODIE
Honestly, I don't know. But, it's pretty common.

JAMES
How so?

MELODIE
It's like... She just has a knack for knowing who needs it? Like it takes one to know one.

JAMES
She does seem a little manic at times.

MELODIE
A little?

James seems a little baffled by her reaction.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Let's just talk about something else.

James uses the stress balls to stretch his fingers.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I do that too.

JAMES
You should if you want to keep your fingers.

(Note: This song shows more of James's history with Ava and connection to her.)

As James sings, Melodie harmonizes with him.

QUICK FLASH

Ava harmonizes with him on a song.

When the song finishes, they sit in silence the air ripe with possibilities. The connection palpable between them.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Thanks, but I really need to get back.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - AFTERNOON

James struggles through more yard work.

Isabella sheepishly strides over.

ISABELLA
How's it coming?

JAMES
It's coming along.

ISABELLA
You don't have to do it all today.

JAMES
I really don't know how long I'm going to be. But, a deal is a deal.
(Beat)
Mind if I ask a question? What's really going on between you and Mel?

Melodie watches from the window to listen in.

ISABELLA
I can't really say.

JAMES
Mothers and daughters fight all the time. Don't they?

ISABELLA
Not like this.

JAMES
Did you have it any different at her age?

Isabella reflects on the question.

ISABELLA
My mom died young.

JAMES
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

ISABELLA
It's ok. But, I'm just trying to
help her manage her life.

JAMES
Isn't that for her to figure out?

ISABELLA
Perhaps.

JAMES
Perception has a funny way of
skewing things. If I asked her
about it, what would she say?

ISABELLA
She'd probably turn up the volume
on her headphones.

Isabella contemplates his words.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Melodie seethes with anger as she listens to music on the
sofa.

As Isabella enters, Melodie erupts into confrontation.

MELODIE
What the hell? Are you gonna give
him my whole life story?

ISABELLA
I don't want to get into this right
now.

MELODIE
This is my life. I don't need
everyone feeling sorry for me. It's
hard enough.

ISABELLA
I'm trying to protect you.

MELODIE
From who? Everyone avoids me
anyway. Meeting him made me feel
normal.

ISABELLA
I can't give you normal.

MELODIE

Clearly.

Melodie storms to her room with a slam of the door.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Isabella, laid out across the sofa in an expressionless daze, doesn't acknowledge James's attempt for her attention.

JAMES

Hey. Are you ok?

Just before he reaches for her shoulder to shake her, she snaps back.

ISABELLA

I'm fine.

JAMES

What can I do to help?

ISABELLA

I don't know.

James reaches to help her up.

Isabella blocks it.

He steps back, cautiously.

She works up the energy to lift herself.

JAMES

Which one is your room?

ISABELLA

First one to the right.

James rushes to the door.

JAMES

Can I get you anything?

ISABELLA

I just need time.

Isabella falls onto the bed and rolls to her side.

James pulls the blankets up. He returns to the hallway and sees an images on the door jamb. It's a half moon with one side weeping.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

James knocks on Melodie's door.

There is no answer so he knocks harder.

Melodie answers expecting a fight. She sees James.

MELODIE

What the fuck!

Melodie closes the door but James stops it.

JAMES

No. You aren't going to ignore this.

MELODIE

This isn't your house. Get out before I call my dad.

JAMES

You're mom needs help.

James points to the other room.

MELODIE

Oh that? That's pretty normal for her.

JAMES

She's struggling.

MELODIE

Yeah. I know. She always is. Some days she's sunshine and rainbows. Other days she's like she's on the moon or something. Don't step into something you don't understand.

JAMES

This isn't hard to understand. Whatever this is, you need to work it out.

MELODIE

Why would you care?

JAMES

You can't avoid it. I've seen too much shit go bad if you do.

MELODIE

There isn't anything I can do.

JAMES
Sure there is.

MELODIE
She doesn't listen to me or my dad.

JAMES
Fine. I don't need this anyway.

MELODIE
What did you just say?

JAMES
I think you heard me just fine. I'm
outta here.

James turns to leave and rushes out the door.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - AFTERNOON

James carries his guitar and backpack to the Jeep.

Melodie stands in front of the car door.

JAMES
Get out of my way.

Melodie, vulnerable, open and honestly lets out her emotions.

MELODIE
You're right. She needs help. But,
I don't know how to help her.

JAMES
I don't know how to help her
either.

MELODIE
She's helping you.

JAMES
I didn't ask for that.

MELODIE
Maybe she'll listen to you.

JAMES
Maybe she won't.

MELODIE
Please. She's drowning. I don't
know if I can keep pulling her up.

James places down the guitar and backpack then rests his hand on Melodie's shoulder.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING

Melodie walks through the hallway to investigate Isabella's bedroom.

Isabella weeps quietly into a pillow. They make brief eye contact. Isabella smiles before she turns away.

Melodie closes the door, wipes off the door jamb with her sleeve, then draws a stick figure with a parachute.

EXT. HOUSE - YARD - THE NEXT DAY

James places all the branches into one big pile. He pulls out the bigger pieces that might make good firewood then tosses them to the side.

Melodie places on work gloves and races over.

JAMES

How's your mom?

MELODIE

Sleeping till forever at the moment.

JAMES

Where's your dad in all this?

MELODIE

They separated.

JAMES

Because of me?

MELODIE

Why would you think that?

JAMES

I just thought.

MELODIE

I found out he's not my paternal dad.

JAMES

He seems like he cares for you. So, why would that matter?

MELODIE
Because.. We've needed to search
for a blood relative.

Melodie jumps in to separate the wood.

James stops her.

JAMES
I got this.

MELODIE
I'm sick. NOT FRAGILE.

JAMES
I just want you to throw the little
pieces over there. I don't think
you're fragile.

James points at the smaller branches while he pulls out
larger ones for firewood.

Melodie acknowledges.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What do you mean you're sick?

MELODIE
She didn't tell you?

JAMES
Tell me what?

MELODIE
I thought for sure she did.

JAMES
She just said you two were having
issues. I don't know. Mother
daughter problems.

MELODIE
There is a little more to it than
that.

JAMES
How so?

MELODIE
Can you promise me something?

James stops to give his full attention.

JAMES

What?

MELODIE

If I tell you, you can't look at me different.

JAMES

Why would I do that?

MELODIE

Because you will.

JAMES

I'm not going to treat you like a sick girl if that is what you're thinking.

Melodie draws the courage to show James her left wrist. Her wrist has a medical device that is widening the vein. This is typical for a hemodialysis patient.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What am I looking at?

MELODIE

It's for my dialysis.

JAMES

Is there something wrong with your kidneys?

MELODIE

Ya think?

JAMES

I've heard people live a long time on dialysis.

MELODIE

I was suppose to have a transplant a couple of days ago. But, they found an imperfection.

JAMES

A transplant?

MELODIE

I have stage five CKD.

JAMES

How many stages are there?

MELODIE

Five.

It's a lightbulb moment as his expression changes as all the pieces start to fit. He realizes her situation is more dire than expected.

JAMES

Are you saying you're dying?

A shrug of her shoulder says it all.

MELODIE

I'm on a wait list. Again.
Somewhere?

JAMES

You're mom can't be a donor?

MELODIE

She got a transplant from my
grampa.

JAMES

And your dad isn't biological.

MELODIE

Nope.

JAMES

Is that why she worries about
getting sick?

MELODIE

Yeah. COVID was even tougher on us.

JAMES

COVID was tough on everyone.

James stops working. He coughs and steps away from Melodie.

MELODIE

Are you ok?

JAMES

Stay away. I said I wouldn't look
at you different. I just can't
right now.

MELODIE

You promised.

James rushes away to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

James searches for a cup to pour some water. He hyperventilates then drinks the water to calm his breathing.

JAMES
What the fuck am I doing here?

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James and Ava sit in silence.

JAMES
Let's leave this place. We don't need to be here.

AVA
Where are we going to go? We don't have any money. We can't even busk for change. I can't live like this.

JAMES
We can find a way.

AVA
I'm scared.

JAMES
We can make it work.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - ISABELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Isabella lays in bed silent but awake.

Melodie enters and lays on the bed next to Isabella. Melodie cuddles her arms around Isabella and holds her tight.

MELODIE
I'm so sorry.

ISABELLA
It's ok.

Melodie cries and searches for comfort.

Isabella doesn't push away the embrace.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

James stares into the ceiling as he tosses and turns to get comfortable.

JAMES
How did I end up here?

James sits to scribble into the notebook.

INT. CABIN - EARLY MORNING

Melodie looks around the cabin. She watches James sleep but have difficulty breathing. Melodie reads from his notebook open on the table.

JAMES (V.O.)
Is it natural to be this afraid?
Driving to some no name town.
Travelling aimlessly into someone
else's disaster? Why did I choose
this? I should have just jumped
into that river. I should have just
crashed the car on the road. But,
I've chosen a slow painful burn.

James turns in the bed.

Melodie gently turns pages to avoid a sound.

MELODIE
What's wrong?

Melodie gently rubs his cheek. She wipes away a tear then nudges on his shoulder. Melodie reads the medical bracelet on James's wrist.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Asthma?

James wakes to see Melodie next to the bed.

JAMES
Why are you here?

MELODIE
I need your help.

JAMES
I can't.

MELODIE

I just need a ride into town. I
have dialysis this morning.

JAMES

What about your dad?

MELODIE

He isn't coming.

JAMES

You know, I'm leaving.

MELODIE

I just need a ride to the doctor's
office.

JAMES

Where's your mom?

MELODIE

Still on the moon. I usually call
my dad when that happens.

JAMES

Why me?

MELODIE

Because, you're still here.

James realizes that she isn't going to accept "No" just like
her mother would do.

JAMES

This is the part when you go
outside and wait for me.

Melodie sees the guitar case by the door.

MELODIE

Wow. This is yours?

James hops out of bed and to the bathroom.

JAMES (O.S.)

Be careful with that.

Melodie finds the guitar case and opens it to admire the
guitar.

MELODIE

Cool stickers.

She traces the "Ava & J" sticker with a touch of her fingers.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I'm still struggling to learn. It's
hard to play with my wrist.

JAMES
You play piano just fine.

James packs all of his belongings into the backpack. He
closes the open notebook with a look back at Melodie.

MELODIE
That's different. I don't need my
wrist as much.

JAMES
Close that up.

MELODIE
You're really leaving?

JAMES
I can give you a ride but it's now
or never.

James rubs his temples to relieve the pressure of a head
ache. He finds an aspirin bottle and pops a couple.

MELODIE
You know those aren't breath mints.

INT./EXT. JEEP - TRAVELLING - MORNING

James drives in silence.

Melodie waits for an opportunity to speak.

JAMES
What are you staring at?

MELODIE
Please, don't leave.

JAMES
I shouldn't be here.

MELODIE
You said you'd help.

JAMES
I know what I said. But, I am not
your guy for this.

MELODIE

Just talk to her. She won't listen to me.

JAMES

Have you really tried without making it a fight?

MELODIE

Please, just one time. She's all I have.

JAMES

What about your dad?

MELODIE

She drove him away too.

JAMES

He was just there the other day.

MELODIE

She cut him out of everything.

JAMES

I think you're relationship with him has nothing to do with her.

MELODIE

Just help me.

JAMES

You're just like her.

MELODIE

How?

JAMES

She doesn't accept a "No" either.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - WAITING ROOM - MORNING

James reviews pamphlets and other reading material as he waits on a sofa. He touches the sofa as it triggers another memory.

COUNSELOR (V.O.)

Open up. Let someone in for once.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - TREATMENT ROOM - MORNING

Melodie quietly watches television as the dialysis machine runs. She searches through channels for something to watch.

Vanessa attends to Melodie's wrist.

VANESSA
Is that the guy?

MELODIE
That's James. He WAS staying in the
cabin.

VANESSA
Not anymore?

Melodie frowns and shakes her head.

There is a tap on the door before James enters.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
I'll leave you two.

Vanessa winks at Melodie before she leaves.

JAMES
Hey, how long does this thing take?

MELODIE
About four hours.

JAMES
You could have warned me.

MELODIE
I'm sorry.

JAMES
Mind if I sit?

MELODIE
Sure.

James finds an empty chair to plop into. He notices the stars drawn across the edges of the Melodie's chair.

JAMES
So, what does this machine do?

MELODIE
It filters my blood. I don't know
how it works but.. I feel a lot
better when it's done.

JAMES
How often do you have to come here?

MELODIE
Three times a week.

JAMES
That's like every other day.

MELODIE
Pretty much.

James carries a pamphlet and gives it to Melodie.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
What is this?

JAMES
What do you know about Bipolar disorder?

MELODIE
Nothing really.

JAMES
Your mom is tired a lot then she gets like this mania right?

MELODIE
Yeah, I would call it something like that.

JAMES
I was reading this pamphlet in the waiting room. It sounds a lot like what she's going through.

MELODIE
Are you serious?

JAMES
Yeah, take a look.

Melodie looks over the pamphlet and recognizes many of the symptoms.

MELODIE
This is totally her.

JAMES
The pamphlet is about this medication you can take for it. But, I don't know your mom well enough.

MELODIE
This is exactly right.

JAMES
You should show her this.

MELODIE
We need to talk to her.

JAMES
No way.

MELODIE
You promised.

JAMES
It isn't my place. Mental health
isn't an easy thing to bring up.
People think it's about being
crazy. They just have challenges.

MELODIE
This is why I'm asking for your
help. I can't say it like you just
did.

JAMES
But, you're family. It doesn't have
to be perfect.

MELODIE
I can't do it alone.

JAMES
What about your dad?

MELODIE
He'll just make her tune it out.

JAMES
I am not the guy for this.

MELODIE
Like it or not you are. Why would
you bring me this?

James stands and opens the door to leave.

JAMES
I don't know.

MELODIE
Don't run from this.

James looks back but says nothing.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - MORNING

James rushes out in search of his Jeep. He looks back to the building.

VANESSA (O.S.)
She still has an hour or so.

Vanessa, at the edge of the building, hides a cigarette.

James finds her voice.

JAMES
Can you call her dad to pick her
up?

VANESSA
Why?

JAMES
Please?

VANESSA
She likes you.

James frowns and turns away.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Give me a good reason.

JAMES
I can't.

VANESSA
She's got over a thousand likes
now.

JAMES
Good for her.

VANESSA
You should see some of the comments
too. I think one guy wants to
produce her music.

JAMES
She should be careful of people
online.

VANESSA
That's why she needs you.

JAMES
She doesn't need me.

VANESSA
She's been through a lot.

JAMES
We all have.

VANESSA
Perhaps, but that girl fights like
no one I've ever seen. She's been
dealing with it her whole life.
Only, it's gotten worse this last
year.

Vanessa extinguishes her cigarette and walks over to James.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Walk with me?

JAMES
I need to go.

VANESSA
What's a couple of minutes?

They walk a few steps around the building.

JAMES
What's with all the buttons?

VANESSA
Just random quotes. Little messages
of positivity.

JAMES
Don't you think it can be dangerous
to hope?

VANESSA
You're already giving her hope.

JAMES
I can't.

VANESSA
She's starting to believe there is
more out there for her beyond a
kidney.

JAMES
It shouldn't be me. I would just
destroy it at some point.

VANESSA

Don't. Be a partner to support her.

They continue around the building.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

That girl has never asked for anything.

JAMES

Why me?

VANESSA

Why not you?

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Totals of recent COVID infections and deaths highlight the TV news.

Ava and James watch on opposite ends of a sofa.

JAMES

It's going to get better.

AVA

What if it doesn't?

Ava, stressed, scratches at her wrist.

James doesn't notice her anxiety.

JAMES

It will.

He leaves.

AVA

Stay with me.

James, already on his way to the bedroom, doesn't hear her.

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ava lingers over him. She kisses him on the cheek

AVA

I'm sorry.

James, sound asleep, feels it and smiles.

BACK TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN WOODS - BEHIND THE COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

James, by the river's edge, skips rocks across the water. He coughs more uncontrollably than before.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER - NURSES STATION - DAY

Vanessa hesitates a moment to make a phone call then dials anyway.

It rings.

INTERCUT

CUT TO:

INT. CONSTRUCTION WORKSITE - CONTINUOUS

Eric answers the phone after checking the number.

ERIC

Is there something wrong?

VANESSA

Nothing's wrong.

ERIC

She got there?

VANESSA

With time to spare. You may need to come get her though.

ERIC

Isabella's not there?

VANESSA

It was James. But I guess he's leaving.

ERIC

I'll get there as soon as I can.

VANESSA

Hold that thought.

Vanessa notices Melodie lugging James's guitar. She covers the phone.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
Where'd you get that?

MELODIE
It's his. Is it ok?

Melodie points up to the roof.

VANESSA
It's fine.

Melodie heads to the stairs.

ERIC
How much time does she need?

VANESSA
Actually, she's going to be fine.

ERIC
I should be there.

VANESSA
Let this one play out. She needs this.

ERIC
Are you sure?

VANESSA
You've always been there. Let her work it out.

Eric struggles to let it go.

VANESSA (CONT'D)
She's got this.

BACK TO:

EXT. JEEP WRANGLER - DAY

James presses the keys into the Jeep's ignition. He contemplates then searches the Jeep for his guitar and backpack.

The guitar is missing.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - ROOF - DAY

Melodie relaxes in the director's chair with James's guitar. She draws a broken heart with stitches to hold it together in permanent marker.

Approaching footsteps.

Melodie blows on the drawing like a kiss. She touches it lightly with a finger assure it stays.

James opens the door then walks over to the ledge careful to not look down.

Melodie strums the guitar.

JAMES

Vanessa told me I'd find you up here.

Melodie focuses on her notebook while she continues to work out the music.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What do you write in yours?

MELODIE

Stuff.

Melodie strums the guitar like it fits her perfectly.

JAMES

I thought you said you were still learning.

MELODIE

What do you think?

JAMES

If you hold it a little differently, you can make it easier on your wrist.

James holds out his hands for the guitar but she tightens her grip.

MELODIE

I can figure it out.

James, careful to not provoke her, finds a comfortable place to sit.

JAMES

I shouldn't be involved.

MELODIE
You're already involved.

JAMES
I'm the last person you want
helping.

MELODIE
Why?

JAMES
I came here running from my own
shit.

James coughs harder.

Melodie stops playing, her concern present, as he coughs.

He finds his breath before Melodie finds the courage to help.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's nice up here.

MELODIE
It's my spot.

JAMES
How so?

MELODIE
I've been here so many times they
let me come up here to get away for
a while.

JAMES
The mountain sure does make you
feel small.

MELODIE
I like to think I'm bigger than the
mountain.

James questions her with a look to explain.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Well, the mountain's boring. It's
always going to be there. It's
almost like it doesn't have a
purpose. I have control over what I
do. I can affect what happens to
me.

JAMES

Are you sure? The machine down stairs says otherwise. Besides, the mountain may have purpose. It shapes our world. It redirects the clouds. Besides, it's not always going to be a mountain. One day, it could be the bottom of the ocean. It just changes slower than us.

MELODIE

What are you trying to say?

JAMES

For someone that says they can control what happens to them, it seems like a lot happens TO you.

MELODIE

That's not what I mean.

JAMES

Then what do you mean?

MELODIE

I mean I can control how I choose to deal with it.

JAMES

Yeah maybe. We still can't change anything.

MELODIE

Why are you being like this?

JAMES

You're asking me to involve myself into your mom's mess. Your mess.

MELODIE

And you're just trying to avoid it even though you act like you want to do something.

Melodie places the guitar back into its case. She packs up a few things to leave.

JAMES

Hey, look. I'm sorry.

MELODIE

Why won't you help me?

JAMES

Life seems to be a lot more random.
We all make choices. Sure. We can
all choose how we deal with it.
But, it's ours. You can't just dive
into someone's shit and expect them
to be happy about it. Trust me.
I've been through enough therapy
shit.

MELODIE

Why did you come here?

JAMES

What do you want me to say? I have
my reasons. I've made a lot of
mistakes in my life. They didn't
lead in any kind of direction. My
choices just changed slowly till
one day I ended up in this mess.

MELODIE

I think that's really pessimistic.
I don't want to think that it's all
random. You ended up. There has to
be a reason.

JAMES

What if, there is no reason or
purpose? What if, it is as
pointless as that mountain. You're
pushed into existence. You didn't
choose to be here. You just...
ended up here.

MELODIE

I'm not going to buy into any of
your suicidal bullshit.

JAMES

Excuse me?

MELODIE

I know you're hypoxic because of
your Asthma.

Melodie taps her wrist to acknowledge his bracelet.

JAMES

You don't know shit.

MELODIE

Don't treat me like I'm dumb. I see
it. The headache. The coughing.

(MORE)

MELODIE (CONT'D)
You're dehydrated. I know what you
are trying to do.

James grows uncomfortable.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I read your little notebook. It's
kind of chicken shit. I'm here
dying for real. And you're-

James's anger boils to the surface.

JAMES
You don't know what it's like.

MELODIE
What do you think I have to live
with?

JAMES
You have people that care about
you.

MELODIE
I am in pain every day.

JAMES
We know. She knows you hurt. She's
been there.

MELODIE
At least you can do something about
your shit. I have to hope for
something terrible to happen.

James stands onto the ledge.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I've got news for you. I've more
reason to jump off this building
than you.

JAMES
You don't know my life. You don't
know what it's like to lose someone
you care about because you didn't
do enough.

MELODIE
And you don't know years of
hospital rooms and kidney stones.
You don't know about dealing with a
crazy mom or knowing that your
father isn't your real dad.

(MORE)

MELODIE (CONT'D)

You don't know what it's like to
hope for someone to die. You don't
know what it's like FOR ME.

JAMES

You're not the first person to have
those issues.

MELODIE

And you are not the first person to
experience loneliness either.

JAMES

How far is it to the street?

MELODIE

I'm not looking.

JAMES

How far!

MELODIE

I'm not going to watch this.

JAMES

What if I was your match and that
was my purpose? What if you could
have a new kidney today? All I
would need to do is jump.

MELODIE

I'm not going to watch you do this.

JAMES

Would you stop me?

MELODIE

Don't.

JAMES

This is for you. This is what
you're hoping for. If someone has
to die to let you live, why can't
it be me?

James holds his arms out and looks into the sky. He leans
back ready to fall.

Melodie wraps her arms around him to pull him back.

James grabs onto a pole to stop their fall. He has to use all
his strength to pull them back to safety. James can feel
Melodie tremble in his arms.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

The emotion runs through her and she cries like never before on his shoulder.

MELODIE

I'm scared.

JAMES

I know. I am too.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The lights flicker on and James finds a mess of broken dishes on the floor. He's careful with his footsteps walking through the debris.

MELODIE

And the day just gets better.

JAMES

She did this?

MELODIE

Ya think? But, new dishes. Yay.

Melodie sarcastically mimics a cheerleader.

JAMES

Do you really think this is the best time to talk to her?

MELODIE

I don't want to lose her.

James breathes in but can barely hold it. He appears pale and there is a blue tinge in his lips.

JAMES

Okay. It's now or never.

MELODIE

I thought you didn't want to get involved.

JAMES

I don't. I didn't.

MELODIE

Why now?

JAMES
You're right. Out of the millions
of places I could of ended up, why
here?

Melodie picks up the shards of broken dishes.

James searches for a broom to clean up the mess.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Loud knocks on the front door wakes James from his sleep. He looks over to see the other side of the bed empty.

JAMES
Ava?

More loud knocks.

James finds some pants to put on.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm coming.

More knocks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Ava?

INT. LAS VEGAS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James rushes through the apartment but sees no signs of Ava. He answers the door.

At the door are two LVPD Officers. The lead, Officer Daniels, glares at James. They look as if they've had a long night because their eyes have bags and their COVID masks are stretched thin.

OFFICER DANIELS
Does Ava Richards live here?

JAMES
She does. What can I do for you
officer?

OFFICER DANIELS
We are here for some information.

JAMES
She's not here at the moment.

OFFICER DANIELS
Yeah, I know. May I come in?

JAMES
Why?

OFFICER DANIELS
I'd rather not do this on your porch.

James shows them in.

The officers enter and stand in strategic places of the room.

JAMES
What's this about?

OFFICER DANIELS
What's your relationship to her?

JAMES
She's my fiancée.

OFFICER DANIELS
Would you have her family contact information?

JAMES
I do. What's going on?

OFFICER DANIELS
Can you take a seat?

JAMES
I prefer to stand.

James recognizes a note on the counter with his name on it.

Officer Daniels pauses a moment because he's about to deliver the worst news. He hates this part but pushes through the expression to explain.

OFFICER DANIELS
Last night we found.....

James already knows what's coming before Officer Daniels can even finish his sentence. His ears ring and fade to silence as he screams out in agony.

BACK TO:

INT. HOUSE - ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Isabella lays in silence on the bed. She clutches a picture of Melodie.

James slowly enters the room.

JAMES
Hey. Are you awake?

Isabella doesn't respond and James slowly closes the door before she snaps together.

ISABELLA
It's okay. I'm awake.

JAMES
Can we talk?

ISABELLA
Sure.

Isabella slowly rises from the bed.

JAMES
Would you mind coming into the other room?

ISABELLA
Okay.

JAMES
Mel and I just thought you might be hungry.

Isabella, visibly depressed, composes herself.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Isabella, draped in a robe, sits at the table and watches Melodie make lunch.

MELODIE
Good afternoon.

ISABELLA
Good morning.

MELODIE
No, afternoon.

Isabella realizes she's been asleep most of the afternoon.

ISABELLA
Did you go to dialysis?

MELODIE
Yeah, James took me.

JAMES
It's all good. You don't have to
worry.

Isabella looks around the table to see toast, cereal, and
some cut fruit.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry.

MELODIE
It's okay mom.

Melodie serves some eggs onto a plate and brings them over.

Isabella wipes the tears from her face. She takes deliberate
breaths to relieve her anxiety.

ISABELLA
I'll be fine.

JAMES
This is what we want to talk about.

ISABELLA
Why?

JAMES
Mel is concerned about your mood
swings.

Isabella blushes embarrassed about the broken dishes.

ISABELLA
I'm sorry. I don't know what came
over me.

JAMES
That's the problem.

MELODIE
Mom. You need help and don't see
it.

ISABELLA
So, I can't worry about you?

JAMES

Do you think that breaking dishes
is about Mel? Or something else?

ISABELLA

You don't know the stress I'm
under.

MELODIE

What do you think I'm going
through?

Melodie feels a sharp pain in her side but plays it off.

JAMES

I can understand your stress.

ISABELLA

No. You can't.

JAMES

Take a look at this objectively.
You have bouts of high energy.
Swings of almost lethargic sleep.
Mel draws on the door jamb based on
your mood. Broken dishes? What else
would you call this?

Isabella closes her eyes as the stress builds up.

ISABELLA

So, you're saying I'm crazy.

JAMES

No. Mental health is not about
crazy. It's about recognizing that
your mind is different than others.

MELODIE

How do we get better?

JAMES

By acknowledging something's wrong.

Isabella stands as the mania grows and paces across the
kitchen.

ISABELLA

If you're such an expert, tell me
why you stranded yourself here.

JAMES

This isn't about me.

ISABELLA
It isn't?

MELODIE
Mom. Let's focus on you.

ISABELLA
No. You two don't get to decide
that I'm the one the needs help.

Isabella races outside in a mess of tears.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Isabella throws chunks of wood against the cabin. Chipping
away at the exterior.

Melodie and James come racing after her.

MELODIE
MOM STOP!

JAMES
Do you think this is healthy?

ISABELLA
You know nothing about me. You've
been here what.. A couple of days
and think you're some therapist.

Isabella continues to throw wood shards that snap and
splinter.

James snaps back at her.

JAMES
I've seen what ignoring this can
do.

ISABELLA
What? What happens?

MELODIE
Nothing good.

ISABELLA
Why would you bring him into this?

MELODIE
Because you don't listen to me or
Dad.

ISABELLA

So, I have mood swings. And you come to this town like some scared kid talking to me like you know better.

JAMES

You're right. I'm not an expert.

ISABELLA

You can leave. I'm not going to have you talk to me like I'm the one that needs help when you clearly need it yourself.

MELODIE

Mom. He didn't have to do this. I asked him to.

ISABELLA

Why?

James boils over with emotion but holds it like a volcano ready to pop.

JAMES

I lost someone close to me. The lockdown, the stress... it was too much for her.

MELODIE

Who did you lose?

JAMES

My fiancée took her own life.

Isabella realizes the power of his words and stops silent.

JAMES (CONT'D)

She struggled with it. Through the stress and anxiety. The lock down put an enormous amount of pressure on her. Neither of us were working.

ISABELLA

I'm sorry.

Isabella shakes with anxiety.

JAMES

Yes. I struggle. I wanted to take my own life. That's why I'm here. I didn't do enough. Now, Mel is trying to do what I couldn't.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)
And you're too proud to admit
there's a problem.

Melodie embraces James and can feel him shiver with
vulnerability.

MELODIE
You're shaking.

Melodie removes the hoodie, her armor, and offers it to
James. She stands vulnerable hopeful he'll accept.

James slides on the hoodie and Melodie hugs him. She grips
the tear on the lower back of it.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
I didn't know.

JAMES
How could you?

MELODIE
Mom. I need you. No matter what
happens to me. I need you to be
alright.

Isabella watches James and Melodie still embraced.

QUICK FLASH

Isabella pushes Eric away.

Watches her hands shake.

Smashes dishes.

Nervous paces.

Rubs counters till the varnish wears.

Endlessly moves furniture around the house.

SNAP BACK

Isabella slowly reaches for them.

Melodie grabs her hand.

ISABELLA
How do I start?

JAMES
Small. Ask for help.

ISABELLA
Okay. I need help.

Melodie releases from James and envelopes Isabella in her embrace.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James strums his guitar for Melodie. He sings a familiar song and she duets with him.

Isabella watches from the kitchen as she realizes their talent.

MELODIE
Thank you.

JAMES
It's up to her now.

Melodie feels a pain in her side then rushes bathroom.

James recognizes the agony in her demeanor.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Are you ok?

MELODIE
I'm fine. Just gotta...

INT. HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melodie, scared, splashes water onto her face then pats it with a towel.

MELODIE
It'll pass. This one will too.

A flush reveals a hint of blood in the toilet water.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Melodie walks by as if nothing is wrong.

MELODIE
I have to go. My dad is coming to pick me up.

JAMES
When?

MELODIE

Right now. He's taking me to a movie. Wanna come?

JAMES

I probably shouldn't

MELODIE

More popcorn for me.

JAMES

I saw you wince. You can't hide it.

MELODIE

Watch me.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

James returns to see the girls embraced.

Isabella cries onto Melodie's shoulder.

MELODIE

It's okay mom. It's okay.

As Melodie sees James, she puts her finger to her lips to keep him quiet.

INT. CABIN - EVENING

James packs his things.

There is a knock on the door.

James opens the door to find Melodie waiting.

JAMES

I thought your dad was coming.

MELODIE

He is. I just have something else I wanted you to hear.

JAMES

Tell your mom.

MELODIE

It's just a kidney stone. It'll pass.

JAMES

Just a kidney stone? You say it like it's normal. Most people have to go to the hospital when that happens.

Melodie shrugs it off. She hands him her phone and ear buds then hits play.

It's another amazing original.

Melodie steps in close enough to kiss him.

James removes the ear buds and gently stops her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't.

The honk of Eric's truck pierces the tension.

Melodie slumps, disappointed, then leaves.

James packs all of his things into the backpack.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't let her watch me die.

James coughs extremely violent. He collapses to the floor, turns pale, and his lips tinge blue. James passes out.

INT. MOUNTAIN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Eric and Melodie relax in a booth. Empty plates pushed forward.

She draws a jumping stick figure man onto the window.

ERIC

Is that a different marker?

Melodie wilts into the booth, tired, then hides the marker.

MELODIE

Maybe.

ERIC

Feeling ok?

MELODIE

It's nothing.

OLLIE

Hey. I haven't seen you in a while.
Your mom let you out of the
dungeon?

MELODIE

Hey Ollie.

OLLIE

Dinner's on me today.

MELODIE

Isn't it always on you.

OLLIE

I take that back then.

Ollie smiles and winks at Melodie. He turns to Eric and
sneers at him before leaving.

MELODIE

Mom agreed to get some help.

ERIC

She did?

MELODIE

I know. Shocked the hell out of me
too.

ERIC

What are you hoping I can do in all
this? You heard her. She doesn't
want me around. I was surprised she
even called tonight.

MELODIE

Just give her the space and time to
get better. She'll come back
around.

ERIC

I still don't trust him.

MELODIE

Why don't you like him?

ERIC

It's not him. It's me. It just
feels like your mom let him in to
get back at me. And now he gets to
do the thing I wanted to do.

MELODIE
And what was that?

ERIC
Have her listen.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Eric pulls into the driveway.

ERIC
Call if you need anything.

MELODIE
I will.

Melodie, labored, exits the truck with a slam of the door.

ERIC
Easy on the truck.

Eric backs and pulls away from the driveway.

Melodie, faint, rushes to the cabin door then knocks as hard as she can. She falls to the ground with a smack of her head on the concrete.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The hard knock wakes James.

James stands and rubs his temples because of a headache.

Out the front window, James finds Melodie passed out on the steps. He quickly opens the door.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The situation is dire. Melodie lays unconscious as a pool of blood forms under her.

James yells but can't find enough air in his lungs to do so. He picks Melodie up and races to the Jeep.

EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Isabella sees James frantic around the Jeep. She runs out to the driveway.

ISABELLA
What happened?

JAMES
I don't know. I just found her on
the steps.

ISABELLA
Where's the blood coming from?

JAMES
I don't know. A kidney stone I
think.

ISABELLA
We need to get her to the hospital.

James reaches for his keys but can barely maintain himself.

They get Melodie into the front seat.

Isabella hops in the back.

JAMES
Where do we go?

ISABELLA
To the clinic.

JAMES
Are you sure we can get there?

James starts the Jeep and steps on the gas.

INT./EXT. JEEP WRANGLER - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

James speeds through traffic.

He looks down to the dashboard to notice he's on empty.

JAMES
Come on. We have to make it.

James coughs and almost loses control.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Please, not now.

ISABELLA
Be careful. Are you ok?

JAMES
I can make it.

The altitude sickness alters his vision and the road looks smaller.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Please.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

James barely holds onto consciousness. He coughs nonstop and can't breathe. James puts the Jeep into neutral as it crashes to a stop into a parked car.

Isabella, nearly pushed into the front seat, appears to be fine.

An officer witnesses the accident and rushes over.

James steps out of the car bruised but still moving.

JAMES

They need help.

James passes out.

OFFICER

What's wrong?

The officer attends to James on the floor.

ISABELLA

I don't know.. But, my daughter is in trouble. She needs help.

Vanessa rushes out to help.

VANESSA

What's going on?

ISABELLA

Another stone.

A couple of nurses arrive on scene with a gurney.

VANESSA

She's losing a lot of blood.

The nurses load Melodie onto a gurney and rush her inside.

ISABELLA

What's wrong with him?

Vanessa examines James. She sees all the signs of hypoxia. Vanessa reads his medical alert bracelet.

VANESSA
I need oxygen stat.

ISABELLA
What?

VANESSA
Did you know he's Asthmatic?

ISABELLA
Oh my god. No. No.....I didn't.

VANESSA
He can't breathe and is becoming
hypoxic.

Isabella, about to lose it, holds on to the moment.

ISABELLA
What can I do?

Another gurney is rushed out to the accident. She helps load James onto it and into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - DAY

Melodie sleeps quietly as the dialysis machine hums next to her. A unit of blood flows down a tube into one arm as the other gets filtered by the machine.

Isabella rests in a chair next to the bed.

A nurse enters.

NURSE
He's waking up.

ISABELLA
Thank you so much.

She rushes to the other room.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - MORNING

It's a common hospital room with two beds and a TV bolted to the wall close to the ceiling. The sun shines through the window.

James wakes to find himself attached to an oxygen machine and an IV in his arm.

He removes the oxygen tubes attached to his nose.

Isabella reaches for his hand to stop him and places it back.

ISABELLA

No, don't. They said you'd been suffering from altitude sickness because you're Asthmatic.

JAMES

I know.

ISABELLA

Why?

JAMES

You know why.

ISABELLA

How come you didn't tell us?

JAMES

I didn't come here to live.

ISABELLA

But you're still trying to...

JAMES

This is the whole reason I drove into the mountains.

ISABELLA

You need help. Just like us. We don't want you to do this.

JAMES

I'm responsible for not getting my fiancée help.

ISABELLA

You chose to help me. It seems like you're trying to make up for it.

JAMES

It doesn't bring her back.

ISABELLA

Sure, sometimes it's going to be hard. But, I'd give anything for Mel.

JAMES

What if I could give it to you?

ISABELLA
You could be a living donor. But, I
don't think they'd let you.

JAMES
What if it's my fate.

ISABELLA
And what if, you were supposed to
live.

JAMES
I don't know if I can.

ISABELLA
What was it you said last night?
The first step is asking for help.

Isabella looks straight into his eyes and James can't find an
answer.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - DAY

Eric waits next to the window. He watches the traffic below
sipping a cup of coffee.

Isabella walks over to him then places her hand on his
shoulder.

Eric looks at her surprised then down at her hand.

ERIC
He woke up?

ISABELLA
He did.

ERIC
That's his Jeep they're cleaning
up? What happened?

ISABELLA
I don't know. We think it was
another stone.

ERIC
She didn't say a thing last night.

ISABELLA
I couldn't tell either.

ERIC
Why doesn't she tell us?

ISABELLA
It's my fault.

ERIC
What's wrong with him? Why did he
crash getting her here?

ISABELLA
He's Asthmatic and hypoxic.

Another surprised look falls onto Eric's face.

ERIC
And he drove, HERE?

The doctor enters to talk with Eric and Isabella.

DOCTOR
How are you today?

ISABELLA
As good as could be expected.

ERIC
What's happening to her?

DOCTOR
She's going into renal failure. We
put her on a high priority list for
a transplant. All we can do now is
wait. I'm sorry. I wish there was
more I could do.

The Doctor exits.

Eric turns disappointed and leaves the room.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eric enters his room.

James can see the fear and anxiety in his eyes.

ERIC
Can we talk?

JAMES
Is she ok?

ERIC
No, she isn't.

JAMES
Why are you telling me this?

ERIC
Why come to Colorado if you know
you're Asthmatic?

JAMES
I think you already know the
answer.

ERIC
I do. But why would you stay? Or
even try to help?

JAMES
They wouldn't let me say no.

ERIC
That's a child's answer. You could
have said no if you wanted.

Eric thinks a moment then turns to leave.

ERIC (CONT'D)
I don't think you really want to do
it or you wouldn't have risked
everything to bring her here.

James can't find a response.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

James stares out the window as the sun sets. The afternoon
light is a glow of orange and amber.

The Doctor pulls the privacy curtain then places themself
close to the bed.

DOCTOR
The nurse said you called for me?

JAMES
Thanks for coming. I want you to
test me to see if I'm a match.

DOCTOR
There is a lot of risk involved.

JAMES
I don't care about the risk.

DOCTOR

It's recommended that you be in prime health to even be considered.

JAMES

Please, just test me. I need to know if I even can help her.

DOCTOR

That's asking a lot.

There is awkward silence as James ponders his words.

The doctor pulls back the curtains and walks over to the nurse waiting for them in the doorway.

The Doctor whispers into the nurse's ear.

JAMES

I need to do this.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - EVENING

Vanessa comes in to serve James dinner. She raises the bed.

VANESSA

Are you ready for dinner?

JAMES

Do you know if my tests have come back yet?

VANESSA

You gave us a heck of a scare last night and you're worried about that.

JAMES

Have they?

VANESSA

No, they haven't.

Vanessa sets up a dinner tray and pushes it close to James.

JAMES

Can you do me a favor? I want to see her.

VANESSA

You're not supposed to be out of bed.

JAMES

Please? I may not get another chance.

VANESSA

I'll see what I can do.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off except for the night light next to Melodie's bed. She writes a few thoughts down on a piece of paper.

Isabella sleeps on the other bed of the room.

Vanessa wheels James in on a wheelchair.

JAMES

Thank you.

She places him close to Melodie then winks at her before leaving.

MELODIE

Hey, how are you?

JAMES

I'm doing okay. You?

MELODIE

I'm just writing a few things down.

JAMES

What are you writing?

MELODIE

Lyrics.

JAMES

Another song? Tell me why you haven't told her.

MELODIE

It's my secret. I've been teaching myself to play for years. You can find a lot on YouTube. I've learned guitar, piano. I wanted something that was completely mine. Even when everything else wasn't. I was building memories for her. Like a little treasure trove of things she could find if I ever...you know.

JAMES
You shared it with me.

MELODIE
That was unexpected. You just gave me the courage. Do you want to hear this one?

JAMES
I'd love to.

MELODIE
This song... it's everything I've been wanting to tell you.

Melodie grabs her scrap of paper to sing the lyrics.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Forgive me. I don't have a piano to play it on.

JAMES
It's okay. I'll imagine it.

Melodie moves her fingers into place as if playing a piano then sings quietly to not wake Isabella.

(Note: This original song encapsulates hope, meaning, and depth of Melodie's character reaching out to James to find his.)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS STAGE PIT - NIGHT

The hospital room changes to the Las Vegas stage James knows well. He envisions Melodie playing the piano and singing this song in front of a large audience.

As the song finishes, the scene fades back into the hospital room.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James's emotions burst. He slowly rises from the chair to sit next to her.

Melodie embraces him.

MELODIE
You have to promise me something.

James acknowledges with a nod.

MELODIE (CONT'D)
Promise me. Keep fighting. The
world is better with you in it.

James cries onto her shoulder and holds her tightly.

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - MIDNIGHT

Melodie stretches herself toward Isabella on the other bed close enough to toss her phone and ear buds next to her.

The phone has a sticky note that says "Play me".

INT. HOSPITAL - MELODIE'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Isabella wakes to see Melodie asleep. She feels the phone pressed against her and reads the note. Isabella taps the phone and it unlocks without a pass code.

There's a video paused on the screen.

She presses play.

MELODIE
(On the video)
I know small steps are hard. I've
not expressed how I feel enough
either. Especially, to you. I don't
know if we'll have another chance.
I've bottled up what I've wanted to
say in music. I want you to hear it
now.

MONTAGE

- Melodie practicing.
- Melodie smiles at the piano on the stage.
- Song after song play.
- James strums a guitar unaware she's recording.

END MONTAGE

MELODIE (CONT'D)
(On the video)
I love you.

INT. HOSPITAL - JAMES'S ROOM - MORNING

James sleeps comfortably while the sun shines onto his face.

Isabella, cuddled up on the chair beside him, sleeps with tissues spread across the floor and Melodie's phone in hand.

James reaches for Isabella to wake her.

JAMES
Hey, what are you doing here?

Isabella's eyes are noticeably red. He realizes that she's cried herself to sleep.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I wanted to save her.

ISABELLA
You're a match.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - DAY

Melodie and James lay on operating tables across from each other.

The doctors and nurses prep each of them for the transplant.

Melodie and James make eye contact as she smiles at him.

MELODIE
You promised.

Their eyes close as the anesthesia takes effect.

INT. SURGERY ROOM - AFTERNOON

The surgeons finish the last bit of the operation.

Melodie and James remain unconscious on opposite tables, stable.

The rhythm of heartbeats on electrocardiograms sound like music.

James's heartbeat erratically flutters then crashes.

A flatline of the electrocardiogram fills the room as doctors and nurses rush to bring him back.

They start chest compressions.

A nurse unpacks an AED device to attach to James.

DOCTOR

Clear!

The shock of the AED convulses James's body.

More chest compressions. A bone cracks under the pressure.

They reset the charge.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

CLEAR!

James's body convulses again.

MELODIE (V.O.)

Promise me.

FADE TO:

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MONTHS LATER

The bright Summer sun shines through the windows and highlights the room in golds and yellows.

Isabella calmly reads a book on coping with anxiety. She practices breathing exercises.

MELODIE

Is it working?

ISABELLA

Mostly. The medication helps. It feels different. You?

MELODIE

Yeah. But, I miss him.

ISABELLA

Just give it time. Are you ready for your first show?

MELODIE

Super.

INT. SMALL-SIZED MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

It's a pack house. The crowd rumbles in anticipation for the performance.

Melodie, as beautiful as ever, waits nervously to go on stage.

MELODIE
Are you ready?

JAMES
Are you?

James settles next to her, new guitar in hand, ready to play with her.

They are close enough to embrace.

FADE TO BLACK